DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 365 448 PS 021 945

AUTHOR Anderson, Jim
TITLE Relationships between Parents' Perceptions of Literacy Acquisition and Their Children's Early Literacy Knowledge.
PUB DATE 12 Jun 93
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, June 12, 1993).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Beginning Reading; *Childhood Attitudes; Foreign Countries; *Literacy; Literacy Education; *Parent Attitudes; *Parents; *Preschool Children; Preschool Education
IDENTIFIERS British Columbia; *Emergent Literacy

ABSTRACT

A study investigated the relationships between the beliefs which parents hold about literacy learning and their children's early literacy knowledge and perceptions of learning to read and write. Sixteen 3- and 4-year-olds who attended the University of British Columbia Child Study Center completed child literacy and literacy perception tests, while their parents completed parent perception instruments and interviews. Some parents held views consistent with emergent literacy (children's own socialization into literacy), while others held more traditional views (centered on reading and writing alone). On the basis of their parents' scores, the children were divided into an emergent literacy group or a traditional group. The traditional group scored higher on measures of emergent literacy knowledge and perceptions of themselves as readers than did the emergent literacy group. Although the results suggest that there is a relationship between parents' perceptions of literacy learning and those which their children are developing, there was a weak relationship between parents' perceptions of literacy learning and their children's emerging literacy knowledge. The findings suggest that children develop perceptions of literacy consistent with those of their parents before they begin literacy programs in school. (Contains 29 references.) (MDM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 365 448

Relationships between parents' perceptions of literacy acquisition and their children's early literacy knowledge.

Jim Anderson

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Jim Anderson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Society
for the Study of Education
Ottawa, Ontario
June 12, 1993

PS 022045

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

1 Perceptions

Our conceptions of how literacy is acquired have been challenged over the last two decades. Research in early literacy reveals that many children learn a great deal about reading and writing prior to formal instruction in school (Teale and Sulzby, 1986). This research suggests that much of this learning results from children's socialization into literacy through participation in such functional literacy activities as: "writing" shopping lists (Taylor, 1983), labelling art work (Ferreiro, 1984), identifying products in the store (Taylor, 1983), using environmental print to identify a favourite restaurant (Goodman, 1984) and by being read to in an interactive way by a significant other (Mason, 1992) .

This research has also led to a re-examination of the child's role in literacy acquisition away from that of a receiver of skills transmitted by an adult and toward that of an active constructor of literacy knowledge. Sulzby and Teale (1991) articulate this position thus:

> ... an emergent literacy perspective ascribes to the child, the role of constructor of his own literacy. Unlike previous work, the central issues now being addressed are the nature of the child's contributions (i.e. individual contributions), the role of the social environment in the process (i.e. social construction) and the interface between the two (p. 729).

This theory of literacy development is usually referred to as emergent literacy and while it has not gained universal acceptance (e.g. Groff, 1992), it has been accepted by many educators. For example, the "whole language movement" which embodies the principles of emergent literacy is gaining wide acceptance (Goodman, 1992). As well, commercial language arts programs have been modified to reflect this trend. And educational jurisdictions (e.g. Ministry of Education, Province of British Columbia) have developed early literacy curricula which are informed by the research in emergent literacy .

Despite what appears to be a growing acceptance of emergent literacy among educators, there are reasons to question whether emergent literacy is the cohesive, universal phenomenon which we sometimes believe it is. For as Adams (1990) points out, much of the research in emergent literacy has been "case studies, chronologies, and descriptions" (p.336) conducted by "parent-academics"

(Heath and Thomas, 1984, p. 51) whose subjects have often been their own children.

There is increasing recognition that literacy learning is a socio-cultural phenomenon and that the way in which the learning is mediated, the meanings which are ascribed to literacy, and the literacy activities in which members of a cultural group engage are determined by the beliefs and values held by the participants (Clay, 1993). For example, in her work with three different cultural groups in the Appalachian area of the United States, Heath (1983) documented qualitative differences between the early literacy experiences of working class children and their middle class counterparts. Tracking the children's literacy development in school, she found that the middle class children whose early literacy experiences approximated the experiences which they subsequently encountered in school were successful whereas working class children whose preschool literacy experiences were not congruent with those at school experienced difficulty and failure and consequently dropped out of school.

Shapiro (1993) investigated relationships between home literacy environment and the early literacy knowledge of preschoolers attending the University of British Columbia Child Study Center and who came from an upper middle class socioeconomic area of Vancouver. He found differences in the home literacy environments and differences in children's early literacy knowledge even within this homogeneous population. Anderson (1992), in a study of the perceptions of literacy learning held by parents of preschoolers who attend the U.B.C. Child Study Center, found that parents beliefs fall along a continuum; while some parents hold beliefs that are congruent with an emergent literacy paradigm, others hold much more traditional beliefs.

Another line of research with school age children has shown that the beliefs which teachers hold about literacy learning influence how they teach literacy (Bondy, 1985; Deford,1978) and that children subsequently develop beliefs about literacy learning which are congruent with those of their teachers (Rasinski and Deford, 1988). However, when there is conflict between literacy learning at home and at school, children's literacy learning does not progress satisfactorily (Fitzgerald, 1993).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships between the beliefs which parents hold about literacy learning and their children's early literacy knowledge and their perceptions of learning to read and to write. Specifically, this study addressed the following questions: (1) Do three and four year old children hold beliefs about learning to read and write consistent with the beliefs of their parents? (2) Are there differences in early literacy knowledge between children whose parents believe in a traditional readiness model of learning to read and write and children whose parents believe in an emergent literacy orientation?

Subjects

The sample consisted 16 three and four year old children who attended the U.B.C. Child Study Center and whose parents were the subjects of the research on parents' beliefs about literacy learning (Anderson, 1992). The children were selected such that eight were from the group whose parents hold views consistent with an emergent literacy paradigm and eight were from the group whose parents hold more traditional views.

Instruments

Home Literacy Environment Index (Modified). Initially designed by Shapiro (1979) as a sixteen "item questionnaire designed to elicit information regarding the literacy environment and interaction with literacy materials in the home" (Reeder and Shapiro, 1992, p.5), the index was utilized as an interview guide in this study. The answers were coded using a Likert - like scale.

Parents' Perceptions of Literacy Learning Interview Schedule.This instrument, somewhat similar to Deford's Theoretical Orientation Profile, is a 33 item interview guide developed by the writer. A review of the literature revealed a number of salient features of emergent literacy (e.g. Children use inventive spelling as they begin to write) which were then reformulated into questions (e.g. "Should you correct your child if she wrote 'kt' for the word 'cat'?") and grouped thematically into reading, writing and literacy-general. Two university professors whose expertise is in early literacy reviewed the instrument to establish face and content validity. The instrument was then administered to a class of 40 senior undergraduate primary education students who had studied emergent literacy in-depth in language arts/reading methods courses. Half the students were instructed to answer as if they believed in a traditional readiness orientation, while the others were

asked to answer as if they subscribed to an emergent literacy view. The answers were then coded as to anticipated responses and a reliability of 95% was established.

Concepts of Print Test- This instrument was developed by Clay (1979) to assess children's concepts of print such as book orientation, directionality, concepts of letter and word, and punctuation. Twenty four questions are asked the child as a book (*Sand*) which is part of the battery is being read. Responses on each question are scored 1 or 0 according to explicit instructions on the test.

Letter Identification- This instrument is part of the Clay (1979) battery. The child is asked to identify in turn 54 upper and lower case letters which are ordered randomly. The child is credited with a correct response if s/he: names the letter, produces an appropriate sound for the letter stimulus (e.g. /b/ for b); or indicates a word which has the letter in the initial position in the word.

Storybook Reading Reenactment. This procedure was developed by Sulzby (1985). In this study, all of the children were read *Are you my mother* (Eastman, 1960) on four occasions by their respective teachers in the month prior to the study. For the reenactment, the children were presented with the book and the examiner asked "(Child's name), would you read this book for me please?". Story book reenactments were scored independently by two raters on an 11 point scale using a classification scheme developed by Sulzby (1985).

Writing Task. This task used the prompts from Ferreiro and Teberosky (1982). Children were asked to write (print) the following words: (1) the child's name, (2) MOM, (3) DAD, (4) BEAR and (5) DUCK. Responses on each prompt were scored independently by two raters on a 1-6 scale developed by the author. This scale in part utilizes Chow's (1986) developmental stages and scores are assigned as follows: scribbling and drawing-1; pre-phonetic-2; semi-phonetic-3; phonetic-4; transitionsal-5 and conventional or mature-6.

Children's Concepts of Reading and Writing. Each child was asked four questions: (1) (Child's name), do you know how to read? (2) How do children learn how to read? (3) (Child's name), do

you know how to write/print? and (4) How do children learn how to write/print?

Procedure

In the first phase of the study, 25 parents of three and four year old children from the U.B.C. Child Study Center were interviewed by the researcher using the Home Literacy Environment Index and the Parents Perceptions of Literacy Learning Interview Schedule. Audiotapes of the interviews were transcribed and coded and it was found that while some parents hold views consistent with emergent literacy, others hold more traditional views. Furthermore, all of the homes provide a rich literacy environment although there is considerable variation even within this relatively homogeneous population (Anderson, 1992). In the second phase of the study, a series of audiotaped interviews were conducted with each child at the Child Study Center by a graduate assistant who is a trained clinician and a doctoral candidate in educational psychology. The audiotaped interviews were then transcribed in their totality by a second graduate assistant and the data were then analyzed.

RESULTS

The results for this study are presented under two headings: children's literacy knowledge and children's perceptions of literacy.

Children's Literacy Knowledge

To facilitate data analysis, the children were grouped on the basis of their parent's score on the Parent's Perceptions of Literacy Interview Schedule. The eight children whose parent's scores were above the mean were designated the Emergent Literacy Group while those whose parent's scores were below the mean were designated the Traditional Group.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

As can be seen in Table 1, the group means are higher for the children in the traditional group on all of the measures of children's emergent literacy knowledge than they are for the emergent group although only minimally so on the story reenactment task. T tests revealed that there are no significant differences between the groups on the various measures. Still though, the results are interesting. We would expect perhaps that children whose parents have a more traditional orientation would outperform their peers whose parents have perceptions which are more

congruent with an emergent literacy perspective on letter recognition. However, the opposite would be expected on the story reenactment, writing, and perhaps the concepts of print tasks since these are more congruent with emergent literacy. Again though, the means favoured the traditional group. It should be noted that the children in the traditional group are on average one month older than the children in the emergent literacy group and age could be a confounding variable with measures such as these.

Pearson product moment correlations were computed between the Parents Perceptions of Literacy Learning Interview Schedule and the other measures excluding the Children's Concepts of Reading and Writing; the data from this instrument are treated descriptively. As can be seen in Table 1, only very weak relationships exist between parents' perceptions and the measures of the children's literacy knowledge. On the other hand, there is a strong relationship between parents' perceptions and the home literacy environment. Working with three, four and five year olds, Shapiro (1993) found moderate relationships between home literacy environment and other literacy measures. However, he found much stronger relationships between home literacy environment and the other measures with the five year olds. Thus the findings from this study are congruent with those of Shapiro.

Children's Perceptions of Literacy

In this section, children's perceptions of literacy are examined. Again, the children were assigned to the emergent literacy group and the traditional group on the basis of their parent's score on the Parent's Perceptions of Literacy Learning Interview Schedule The responses of the children were then analyzed by grouping them into themes.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

Question 1(Do you know how to read?) is designed to elicit children's perceptions of themselves as readers. That only one child in the emergent literacy group (E) answered this question affirmatively while six of the children (M, K, N, I, H, and O) responded with an unqualified "no" is unanticipated. For a key assumption underlying emergent literacy is that children's initial attempts at reading-which all of these children were able to engage in to varying degrees in the story reenactment task- are legitimate in their own right (Teale and Sulzby, 1986). Intuitively one would

expect that these parents whose views about learning to read reflect an emergent literacy orientation would be helping children develop the perception that their early attempts are "real reading". On the other hand in the traditional group, only two of the children (T and L) contended that they could not read while the other children saw themselves as readers or as having some ability in this regard (e.g.G: Not lots of books. I just know how to read some). Again, intuitively, one would expect that parents who hold more traditional beliefs would be helping children develop the perception that "real" reading means being able to identify the words on a page and that reading like behaviour (Holdaway, 1979) is not really reading.

There appear to be two viable explanations for this finding. Given the strong correlation between parent's perceptions and home literacy environment reported earlier, we can conclude that the children in the emergent literacy group have experienced a richer literacy environment than the children in the traditional group. Therefore, because of this increased exposure to reading, the children in the emergent group might have a broader view of reading than being able to read **particular words** or **particular books** and recognize that they are unable to do this. Another interpretation is that parents of children in the emergent group might subscribe to the notion that children learn to read "naturally" (e.g. Forrester, 1977) by being immersed in reading. They simply read to their children and do not expect their children to attempt to read. On the other hand, parents of children in the traditional group would probably be inclined to attempt to teach children to read specific words and books and to expect children to engage in reading as a result of this teaching.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

The second question is designed to ascertain what children perceive about learning to read. In general, the perceptions of the children were strikingly congruent with those of their parents. As can be seen in Figure 2, reading books was identified by four of the children (E, N, H, and K) in the emergent literacy group as the means by which children learn to read. As well, three children (N, H, and C) recognized the role of a significant other. The research in emergent literacy has demonstrated that being read to by a significant other plays an important role in children's early literacy development. These children, whose parents subscribe to this model of learning to read and actualize it through the experiences they provide for their children, appear to be developing

perception congruent with those of their parents. Only one child (I) from the emergent group suggested that learning to read entails learning letters and spelling. Of course, learning letters and spelling are regarded as important within an emergent literacy model. However, the primacy which this child affords this knowledge seems to suggest a more traditional perception of reading on her part. Children in the traditional group are developing perceptions of reading which reflect a more traditional orientation. For example, only two children (A and T) mentioned the importance of books and both referred to spelling at the same time perhaps indicating the centrality which they ascribe to this skill in learning to read. In contrast to the emergent group, only one child (R) in the traditional group talked about the role of a significant other. G's response is quite interesting and can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand it could suggest the perception that learning to read involves much practice and successive approximations toward exactitude - a basic tenet of emergent literacy; on the other hand it could reflect the belief that learning to read means learning to memorize words and that one becomes a reader when one gets the words right. Two of the children in this group (F and L) see learning to read as a school based phenomenon and again this reflects a traditional orientation where children became ready to read prior to schooling and then learned to read in school (Teale and Sulzby, 1986).

[Insert Figure 3 about here]

As can be seen in Figure 3, the third question is designed to ascertain whether children see themselves as writers. While most of the children in the emergent literacy group did not perceive of themselves as readers, the opposite was true for writing in that five of the children responded with an unequivocal "yes" to this question. Children's early attempts at writing are valued and seen as important steps in a child's literacy development from an emergent literacy perspective. And indeed, it appears that most parents in this group are helping children develop a perception of themselves as writers as we would expect. The two children who felt that they could not write were also two of the children who had indicated that they did not know how to read. Within the traditional group, only two (Y and B) of the children answered with an unequivocal "yes" in response to this question. Four of the children (G, R, F, and A) indicated that they could write specific items (e.g. I can write some words). It is worth noting that three of these children (A,G, and R) had very similar perceptions of themselves as readers. As well, two of the children indicated that they did not know how to write. Again, it appears that the children in this group are

developing more traditional perceptions of writing. It is interesting that the two children in this group who see themselves as writers also see themselves as readers.

[Insert Figure 4 about here]

Question 4 is designed to elicit children's perceptions of how children learn to write. Six of the children (M, E, N, I, K and O) in the emergent literacy group mentioned the role of a significant other in learning to write (e.g. M: By telling their mommy 'How do I write?' She tells me how to write my own name). Again, this recognition of the role of the significant other was highlighted by this group of children in response to a similar question about reading. O's mention of puzzles is quite interesting. Unfortunately, a portion of his response is inaudible on the audiotape and it was not possible to determine if he was comparing learning to write with solving a puzzle or whether he had simply changed the topic and was referring to some other type of puzzle. Three of the children (K, C, and H) mentioned or alluded to learning how to print letters as opposed to words or books which reflects a traditional view of learning to write. None of these three children mentioned such sub-skills in relation to reading although K did respond to question 2 (Figure 2) by reciting a number of letters.

Only one child referred to the role of a significant other in the traditional group where most of the responses tended to reflect traditional perceptions. For example, two of the children (F and Y) saw learning to write as a school based task. Likewise, B and L refer to letters and tracing letters. And as was the case in the parallel question on reading, one can interpret G's response either as an insightful analysis of the emerging nature of young children's writing or as learning to write simply means learning to spell correctly. Likewise, it is difficult to categorize A's response, although she seems to be alluding to the fact that children learn about writing from books which of course would be congruent with emergent literacy.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study suggest that there is a relationship between parents' perceptions of literacy learning and the perceptions of literacy learning which their children are developing. However, with this group, there is an extremely weak relationship between parent's perceptions of literacy learning and their children's emerging literacy knowledge. And there are no statistically significant

differences between the measures of early literacy knowledge of children whose parents subscribe to an emergent literacy view and children whose parents hold more traditional views of learning to read and to write.

Several researchers (Bondy, 1985; Rasinski &Deford, 1988) have suggested that school aged children develop perceptions about literacy consistent with that which is mediated to them through the instruction of their teachers. The findings here suggest that children are developing perceptions of literacy consistent with those of their parents before they begin literacy programs in school. Whether they maintain these perceptions after they enter school or indeed adopt perceptions of literacy as a result of instruction as suggested by the research just cited needs further investigation.

It is often implied in the research (e.g. Bondy, 1985; Church and Newman; 1985) that literacy learning is imperilled with children who develop narrow, traditional perceptions of reading. Interestingly, the opposite appears to be the case here. Further research with a more diverse population is needed to explore this further as is longitudinal research which would track children from preschool into the primary grades.

REFERENCES

Adams, M. (1991). *Beginning to read: Thinking and learning about print*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Bondy, E. (1985). *Children's definitions of reading: Products of an interactive process*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Gainesville, Florida.

Chow, M. (1986). Measuring the growth of writing in the kindergarten and grade one years: how are ESL children doing? *TESL Canada Journal,4*, 35-47.

Church, S and Newman, J. (1985). Danny: A case of an Instructionally induced reading problem. In J. Newman (Ed.), *Whole language: Theory in use*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Clay, M. (1993). Already a learner: A fable, *Reading Today, 3*, (5), 10.

Clay, M. (1979). *The early detection of reading difficulties*. Auckland: Heinemann.

Deford, D. (1978). *A validation study of an instrument to determine a teacher's theoretical orientation to reading instruction*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Indiana University.

Eastman, P. (1960). *Are you my mother?* New York: Random House.

Ferreiro, E. (1986). The interplay between information and assimilation in beginning literacy. In W. Teale and E. Sulzby (Eds.), *Emergent literacy: Writing and reading*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Ferreiro, E. and Teberosky, A. (1982). *Literacy before schooling*. Exeter, NH: Heinemann.

Fitzgerald, J. (1993).Literacy and students who are learning English as a second language. *The Reading Teacher, 46*, 638-647.

Forrester, A. (1977). What teachers can learn from natural readers. *The Reading Teacher, 31*, 160-166.

Groff, P. (1992). Is *RT* a whole language journal? [Letter to the editor]. *The Reading Teacher, 46*, 7.

Goodman, K. (1992). I didn't found whole language. *The Reading Teacher, 46*, 188-199.

Goodman, Y. (1984). The development of initial literacy. In H. Goelman, A. Oberg and F. Smith (Eds.), *Awakening to literacy*. Exeter, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.

Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life and work in communities and classrooms*. London: Cambridge University Press.

Heath, S. B. and Thomas, C. (1984). The achievement of preschool literacy for mother and child. In H. Goelman, A. Oberg, and F. Smith (Eds.), *Awakening to literacy*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books.

Holdaway, D. (1979). *The foundations of literacy.* Sydney: Ashton Scholastic.

Mason, J. (1992). Reading stories to preliterate children: A proposed connection to reading. In P. Gough, L. Ehri and R. Treiman (Eds.), *Reading acquisition.* Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Ministry of Education, Province of British Columbia (1990). *Primary program: Resource document.* Victoria, British Columbia.

Pellegrini, A. (1991). A critique of the concept of at risk as applied to emergent literacy. *Language Arts, 68,* 380-385.

Rasinski, T. and Deford, D. (1988). First graders conceptions of literacy: a matter of schooling. *Theory Into Practice, 27,* 351-367.

Reeder, K. and Shapiro, J. (1993). Relationships between early literate experience and knowledge and children's linguistic pragmatic strategies. *Journal of Pragmatics, 19,* 5-26.

Shapiro, J. (1993). Preschool factors, home environment and later reading achievement. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Shapiro, J. (1979). *Investigating the home environment for its impact on children's reading.* Paper presented at the 24th Annual Convention of the International Research Association. Atlanta, Georgia.

Sulzby, E. (1985). Children's emergent reading of favorite storybooks: a developmental study. *Reading Research Quarterly,* 20, 458-481.

Sulzby, E. and Teale, W. (1991).Emergent literacy. In R. Barr, M. Kamil, P. Mosenthal and P.D. Pearson (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research: Volume II.* New York: Longman.

Taylor, D. (1993). *Family literacy.* London: Heinemann Educational Books.

Teale, W. and Sulzby, E. (1986). *Emergent literacy: Writing and reading.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex Publishing Corporation.

Figure 1
Question 1: "(Child's name), do you know how to read?"

Emergent Literacy Group:

M: "No."
K: "No."
N: "No."
I: "No."
H: "No."
O: "No."

C: "No, but I know how to read this book."

E: "Yes."

Traditional Group:

T: "No."
L: "No."

A: "Not really. Not the days but only one book."
G: "Not lots of books. I just know how to read some."
R: "Only that book. And I can read to Jessie and to you but not to anyone else"

F: "Yes, I know how to read Brian's books. They're really tiny."

Y: "Yes."
B: "Yes."

Figure 2
Question 2: "How do children learn how to read?

Emergent Literacy Group

M: "I don't know. (Inaudible) big child's. By learning-I don't know what they do."
O: "I don't know. Grownups know how to read."

E: " They read books. They read writing and they read Valentines."
N: "By practicing. I'm looking at books and by my Mommy and Daddy. Their mommy and daddy reading books to them."
H: "People teach them. They can read them stories. They can help each other. They can read a book again."
K: "T-I-S-N-P-C-W . We read a book Cat in the Hat."

C: "My brother was teaching me. [He] tells me."

I: "They just try to spell something and it's a word and maybe if they try they can spell hat or bat or milk. They learn their letters. They go to school and they learn to sing songs."

Traditional Group

A: "Oh I know how to spell arm, cat and dog. I know how to spell my sister's and mom's and dad's and my nanny's names... I don't know.. Maybe [they] listen to [their] mother reading a book and [they] remembered the words."
T: "They got so smart. He got some books from school and he knows what they spell."

F: " They learn at school."
L: "I don't know-just at school (inaudible) just with my teacher (inaudible) reads a book."

R: "Because they can watch their mother's how they do it. They can even learn without their mothers sometimes. They think how you do it."
G: "They just read- keep reading until they learn how to read the right words. They're just reading wrong words and they're reading some of the right words, more right words, more right, and finally they learn to read all the right words."

Y: "By writing. I learned to read by writing my name."

B: "A-B-C. They go home and watch the video and learn their A-B-C."

Figure 3
Question 3: "(Child's name), do you know how to write?"

Emergent Literacy Group

E: "Yes."
K: "Yes."
N: "Yes."
I: "Yes."
C: "Yes."

M: "No. I know how to write my own name."

H: "No."
O: "No."

Traditional Group

Y: "Yes."
B: "Yes."

G: "I know how to write some words."
R: "I can write a bit."
F: " Only some words.I can write J, I can write fox"
A "Well, I tried to copy a love card I was giving to my friend but I couldn't copy it. (Inaudible) so hard. I know how to write my name."

L: "No."
T: "No."

Figure 4
Question 4: How do children learn how to write?

Emergent Literacy Group

M: "By telling their mommy 'How do I write?' She tells me how to write my own name"
E: "They write books. They write books at school. (inaudible) write a picture and paint. I saw my dad write books."
N: "My mommy teach me how to write my name. And when I've done my picture like painting, I put my name down on it at the end. And my sister taught me how to write rain."
I: "Well, they just write something. Maybe their mother could write something and they could spell it.... I just kept practicing and did it."
O "Grownups need to help children... help them with puzzles."

K: "You do one tiny little circle. My brother showed me."
C: "My dad has a computer. I can draw a P. I just knowed."
H: "I don't know. I can colour. My brother already knows. You need to have a pencil and write some letters.

Traditional Group

R: "They copy how their mother does. They learn by themselves sometimes. They copy their dads and their mothers. They copy them writing.

Y: "A long time ago I learned how to write apple. By practicising.They go to school.
F: "At school. Cause they try to write. Then they keep writing, keep going to school, keep going to school - then they learn."

T: "I don't know. I know how to print."

B: "They learn how to write B for Brian and A for apple and N for pen."
L: "Trace the W on my name. I don't know. Maybe they just play Leggo.Tracing.

A: "I know how to write my name...Well maybe there's special something that you learn without teaching . A miracle. Maybe the books tell them how to write.
G: "They write wrong words and then the right words all the time. Finally they learn to write the right word. They circle wrong words and then they keep on trying and finally they learn how to do the right words."

Table 1
Means for age and literacy measures

	Age	Letter	Concepts	Story	Writing	HLEI	Parents perceptions
Emergent	4-2	16	5.25	3.9	9	60.5	31.1
Traditional	4-3	22	7.35	4	12.75	53	25

Table 2
Correlations

	Letter	Concepts	Story	Writing	HLEI
Parents' perceptions	.21	.13	.08	.16	.82